

Customer Service Panel

Chair's Report

Topics Discussed & Presenter

1. Plans for Policy and Strategy

Karen Little, Head of Customer and Community Engagement
Saima Farooq Ahmed, Head of Business Excellence and Strategy

2. Update on Reasonable Adjustments

Kirsty Dyer, Portfolio Programme Manager

3. Anti-Social Behaviour Audit Update

Lisa Fairlie, Director of Housing Operations
Gill Smith, Community Safety Manager

Observations, Recommendations & Actions

1. Saima gave the Panel an overview on Platform's current approach to Strategy and Policies and explained we wanted to explore how we can create more meaningful engagement with panel members. Platform wishes to involve customers earlier in our processes to embed the customer voice in design and decision-making.

Most policies are in place to these require review and updating cyclically to remain current and effective. PHG currently manages a total of 117 policies, covering various aspects of service delivery, governance, and compliance. On occasions and as needed, new policies will be written by service area leads.

The Panel were advised that we are exploring the idea of piloting a customer co-creation approach, either with a new policy or one that is due for review. This will allow us to work with the Panel and a wider group of customers to shape the policy collaboratively.

Karen put several questions to the Panel to seek their input which included:

- How would you like to be involved in the development and review of our Strategies and Policies?
- What would success look like for the Panel?
- What would Panel members need from PHG to achieve this?
- Specialist interest groups vs generic approach?

The panel had a workshop style discussion with a whiteboard used to capture comments, ideas and feedback.

Action: Comments and ideas will be included in a draft Plan which will be shared with the Panel by Saima and Karen

2. Kirsty gave an overview of the Customer First Programme which is in place to ensure PHG can effectively deliver reasonable adjustments in line with the Consumer Standards and the Equality Act 2010. The focus is tailoring services to meet the unique needs of individual customers, promoting dignity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Kirsty explained that Platform must demonstrate inclusive service delivery and robust assurance mechanisms as future audits will include compliance with Consumer Standards. Kirsty explained that phase 1 of the Customer First Programme was about data collection which included identifying gaps in customer data and an analysis of data to understand customer needs. Phase 2 of the Programme will see ongoing data collection, using insights to embed reasonable adjustments into everyday services, training colleagues to identify and respond to customer vulnerabilities and promoting transparency around why data is being collected.

Kirsty advised that PHG have analyzed the information to identify the top 10 reasonable adjustments that would have the greatest impact with these rolling out. Examples are:

- “Alternative formats” – Providing large print or other accessible formats based on customer preferences
- more time to respond to door knocks -especially relevant for repairs and other in-person visits, to avoid mis-logging missed appointments
- preferred contact channels - respecting customer preferences (e.g., email over phone).

We are also embedding adjustments into core services such as aligning policies and procedures (e.g., repairs, complaints) to reflect reasonable adjustments, ensuring new staff are trained and aware of expectations and continuing to co-design with customers to expand and refine adjustments based on lived experience

Kirsty outlined the next steps in the Programme which will be to roll out training across all customer-facing teams, continuing data collection and refinement and monitoring the impact through feedback and case studies.

Action: to continue to update the panel with progress

Lisa explained that an external audit had recently taken place on antisocial behaviour (ASB) and noise nuisance. The audit was conducted by newly appointed Group Auditors Beever and Struthers, to provide assurance that PHG has effective measures in place to manage ASB, including noise nuisance. The scope of the audit was broad and robust. Areas covered in the audit were policies and procedures, assessment of ASB and noise nuisance handling, staff interviews (approx. 15 Neighbourhood Officers) to gauge understanding, satisfaction with training, stakeholder engagement and complaint learning.

Gill advised that the audit was conducted over 10 working days. During this period, the team gathered information as requested by the Auditors, including 50 ASB and noise nuisance cases. In addition, Auditors required evidence of active collaboration with external partners such as police, social services, and medical professionals. This included demonstrating appropriate information sharing and joint working arrangements.

Throughout the audit period, the team responded to requests for various types of documentation and evidence. The goal was to ensure Auditors had full visibility into how PHG delivers ASB services and whether those services are effective and compliant.

Lisa was pleased to advise the Panel that PHG received “substantial” assurance on the design of controls, meaning the Auditors were confident that the policies and procedures in place for managing ASB and noise nuisance were well-structured and aligned with expectations. To achieve this rating, PHG had to demonstrate that the policies were not only well-designed but also effectively implemented in practice. This included evidence showing that Neighbourhood Officers, Locality Operations Coordinators, and Community Safety Officers were consistently applying the procedures in their day-to-day work.

Regular internal audits of ASB cases confirmed that staff were working in line with procedures and sector best practice.

Chair's Thoughts

The presentations were of interest to Panel members, which resulted in excellent questions and follow-up actions.

Panel members have fed back that they feel the amended approach to presentations is allowing for rich conversations which allow time for questions and seek clarification where needed.

Panel members really want to see how the expertise they are given can be of use to Platform and customers and they really value the time to reflect, absorb and discuss topics in addition to receiving presentations.

We have noted the feedback, questions and ideas shared by Panel members which are influencing next steps across topics.

The panel is looking forward to presenters updating where appropriate and will ensure that impact for customers is recorded.